

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

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It will be seen that in all these cases the woman is a potential wife for the man she calls *wagun*, for he may have as his wives two sisters either synchronously or consecutively, and he is entitled to take his brother's wife after the death of his brother. If this marriage takes place, the terms for 'husband' and 'wife' are substituted for *wagun*. But as long as the *wagun* relationship obtains, certain restrictions are observed. I once saw Marotē pass near a log on which her *wagun*, Togen, was sitting. As she approached she called out '*Watagio!*' ('Look out!') Immediately he rose from his seat, and remained standing till she had gone. People who are *wagun* to each other may not eat in each other's presence. If this cannot be avoided, the woman must cover her face with her hood. They may not touch each other's body or hair. A man's wife's sister may not prepare his food. Sobak's wife's sister, Bawt, was divorced from her husband at Hanahan and came to live with her sister at Kurtatchi. In the olden days Sobak would, he told me, have married her, but he refrained from doing so in deference to the wishes of the priest, who discourages polygamy. Bawt and her three children, however, made their home permanently with Sobak and his wife, sharing their single hut. While his wife was paying a visit to her relations at Hanahan, both continued to sleep in the hut, but Sobak went to his *kia*, Watchiu, to get his meals. (Thus precisely reversing the taboos observed among ourselves!)

Wagun may not address each other by their personal names, but may use adopted names, e.g. the woman may be called by the name she takes if her child dies. For example, Pesē's first child died when it could barely walk; since then she has been known as Tchinamoa—'mother of one (dead child)'. Matarē, her sister's husband, calls her by this name, never using the name Pesē.

These taboos are usually brought to an end when the mother or father of the woman dies. Ceremonial pudding is prepared by the woman and her sister. A length of *imun* (ceremonial currency of flying fox or porpoise teeth) is hung on a spear by her sister's husband, and put up beside her hut. The woman comes out with her hood on her head. Her *wagun* comes up to her and takes it off. The woman then takes possession of the spear and the *imun*, but at some later date she must reciprocate with another gift of like nature. The two families eat the ceremonial pudding together, and the *wagun* taboos then cease to be observed.

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In Speaking of illicit

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MARRIAGE AND SEX RELATIONS

583 intercourse with another man's wife, they use the expression *gun*
 [837] *amot*, which is fairly translatable by 'steal' and is applied also to
 acts of theft in the ordinary sense in which we use that term. It is,
 of course, dangerous to rely too much on linguistic evidence, but
 [684] it is noteworthy that to 'steal' a man's wife and to steal his cere-
 monial currency were once bracketed together, by a man with
 whom I was discussing the subject of theft, as crimes belonging
 to the same category, and that in some cases the same penalty
 has been exacted for both. All the people with whom I discussed
 the matter in relation to marriage gave me the impression that no
 distinction existed in their minds between paying for a wife and
 paying for anything else of importance.

586 The rules governing the operation of the custom are entirely
 compatible with this view. If the woman refuses to perform the
 duties of a wife, her husband can, and does, divorce her and
 demand his currency back—he is not receiving what he paid for
 so he repudiates the purchase. But if she has cause to divorce
 him, he does not get his currency returned to him, the break-down
 of the transaction was not her fault. If she dies without giving
 him a child, he will expect to be repaid, unless he receives a sister
 in her place. Pinari told me that the currency handed over in
 respect of Riro, the wife of his son Wasē, who had died, childless,
 not very long before my visit, would be returned, except one
 string, which was to be retained by her relatives 'because her
 body stays here', the woman having been buried at Kurtatchi.

I have not seen a similar custom recorded elsewhere. If her death
 845 occurs in child-birth, and the child lives, repayment is made in
 768 part only, one string being retained 'for the child'. But if the
 child dies too, the full amount is usually asked and given. For a
 wife dying after having borne more than one child, no repayment
 is expected—the husband has had his money's worth, so to speak.

562 It does not follow that the woman is regarded as the absolute
 property of the man to do as he likes with. That is definitely not
 581 the case. What seems to me to be the crucial point was put very
 clearly by a woman, Matēv, on our way back from witnessing this
 very transaction, when the matter was naturally the subject of
 conversation. She said:

'Tab to wen nor a hiki pi mon.'

Thing pay we genitals of woman.

i.e. 'What we pay for is the woman's genitals.' That is to say,

MARRIAGE AND SEX RELATIONS

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though the other villagers are always asking him why he ~~does~~ not do so. He says he does not want to, because he is too sad over the loss of his brother. If another man wanted to marry her, he would be willing. 587

The widow goes to her husband's brother as soon as the final funerary rites have been held (see Chap. XIV). There is no ceremony on such an occasion. She has (so far as I could learn, but it is difficult to be quite sure) little choice in the matter if her late husband's brother really wants her, but otherwise, should she prefer not to marry again, she will probably not be forced to do so. If she is old, she usually goes to live with one or other of her married children, who will support her. In several instances known to me, the woman chose to return to her own village, as Matēv did when her husband Boar of Saposa died. In her case it was clearly to her advantage to do so, since she holds a prominent position at Kurtatchi as sister of the *tsunaun tʃan*, and mother of his heir. Another Saposa man wanted to marry her, but she wished to come home, and her brother Pinari supported her. He told me that if it had been Boar's brother who wanted her he would not have objected, although he was glad to have her and her children at Kurtatchi. 587 768 ●

If the husband's brother takes the widow, he is bound to look after her and her children, if young, or to make provision for them in some other way. Sometimes an arrangement is made with the woman's relatives, who may, and often do, take one or more of the children and bring them up.

If another man wishes to marry her, he gives an agreed amount of ceremonial currency to the deceased husband's brother, and one string to the woman's relatives: not more than one, as my informants were careful to explain to me, because enough had already changed hands on the occasion of her previous marriage. The children usually go with their mother to her new home, and I have never heard of a man refusing to take them. But sometimes one will go to her relatives by mutual agreement.

The custom of marrying the brother's widow is now falling into disuse owing to the discouragement of polygamy by the missionaries. 587 178

DIVORCE

Divorce is frequent and easy. The woman has as much right to demand it as the man, and neither party can deny it to the other. 586

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

881 and in the ceremony as I saw it, the time during which the girl remained in her mother's hut was only five days. But in discussion, informants told me that she used to remain in her mother's hut for one month after the first discovery of the flux. At Saposa, also, the longer interval was given.

881 At Saposa there is a further elaboration. A wooden figure, life-size or larger, is carved out of soft wood, to represent a girl ornamented as she would be for this ceremony, with her hair dressed
184 and painted, and a tortoise-shell filigree ornament round her neck.
532 The pattern of the cicatrization on her body is also indicated. This
585 figure is kept in her mother's hut during the period of her seclusion. It appears also at her wedding. One such figure, which I saw during a brief visit to Saposa, had been made for a girl who had died; it was to be burnt after a suitable interval with other of her belongings (Pl. 32).

● [768]

WOMEN'S VIEWS ON MENSTRUATION

841 The reason given by the natives for holding the ceremony above described is one which I have not seen put forward elsewhere, namely, to ensure that the girl does not menstruate too frequently or too freely. All the details of the ritual appeared to be directed towards this end, e.g. avoidance of drinking any liquid or eating taro boiled in water during the period of the flux, the use of hard-timbered trees in the preparation of the appropriate mixture to be drunk by all, including the girl herself, at one stage of the proceedings, and the preservation in the rafters of the hut of the package containing the roots and leaves from which this mixture is prepared, to be hardened by the smoke, and thrown away when a child is desired. In all discussions arising out of the ceremony, and from several different informants, this was the only explanation that was forthcoming, and I see no reason to doubt its validity.

145 The usual duration of the menstrual period *iw* (*wa* = blood)
841 among these women would appear to be three days per month. No one reported a semi-monthly period. A few told me that they had it for one or two days only. One case of five days was reported indirectly; I was also told that the woman in question was not in the habit of taking any of the medicines for controlling the flux which appear to be in universal use. Since data of this sort cannot be checked by personal observation, and in view of the vagueness of all these people in regard to any question of time, I feel no great

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USEFUL ARTS

342 *pirpo*

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tokoman

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*a tō**nin**gerom or**girum**tsir a tō**hinb**tsiku a tō*

lower of two cross-pieces at ends of hut, and across at each house-post. Any kind of wood may be used for these.

upper of two cross-pieces at ends and at house-posts. sago palm whose leaves are used for thatch. Thatch also called *a tō*.

outer bark of stem of plant of that name used to tie sheets of thatch to the *matnal*.

mid-rib of sago-palm leaf, used to fix leaves together in lengths to make thatch.

to prepare the sago-palm leaves by taking out the mid-rib. to make the holes for fixing the leaves together.

to fix the leaves together into lengths ready to put on.

The men's house.

342 The men's house (*tobdr*) is made in exactly the same way as the ordinary huts of the village; the size varies according to the number of people who are likely to use it. Besides serving as the sleeping apartment for the boys wearing the *upi*, the *tobdr* is the men's club; its front verandah is seldom without a group of men sitting or standing round talking and chewing the betel mixture. To it male guests from other villages are taken on their arrival, each to the *tobdr* of the clan to which he belongs.

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The *tobdr*, two or more, as the case may be, are sometimes placed just outside the main line of huts, from which they may be screened by a hedge of trees or a bit of uncut bush. But often they are placed in the centre of the village, abutting on, or actually in the precincts of, the central space where dances are held. The three

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tobdr of the original village of Kurtatchi were a little to one side of the village, and had special paths leading from them to the shore, which might not be used by women, who avoided their vicinity altogether. The two which were constructed after the moving of the village of Gomen to join that of Kurtatchi, were built at one end of the central space, between the two lines of huts added by the Gomen people. The hut of a man who had died was taken down to make room for them, the boys who had shared it with him being afraid to go on living there. Even in that prominent position, the *tobdr* were strictly avoided by the women, who always made their way round by the back of the lines of huts.

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Ceremony on completion of tobdr. The completion of a new *tobdr* is signaled by a feast involving the killing of several pigs,

AESTHETIC ARTS

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Mábu (also called *aura*).

Next to the slit-gong, the most highly valued musical instrument is the *mabu*. It is used for dances, both ceremonial and social, in conjunction with the Pan-pipes, as an alternative to the slit-gong; the two are never heard together. 534

Manufacture. The *mabu* is made of the trunk of a small tree hollowed out. Several trees are suitable, including the kapok (*wakokon*); the wood must be hard enough on the outside to stand wear and tear, and soft enough inside to be picked out easily. A length is cut rather longer than is required for the finished instrument, stripped of its bark, and set up in the ground at an angle convenient for working. The trunk is then hollowed out with an iron pig-spear. Fire is used to assist the process. In the olden days a spear of hardwood was used. The mouthpiece consists of half a coco-nut shell with a hole bored in the top, stuck on with the kernel of the 'putty-nut'. 549

The outside may be left plain, or may be carved with various traditional designs, similar to those in use on canoes, paddles, &c. (see Fig. 25). The size varies considerably; the largest I saw was almost as tall as the player, while one which was made for me, somewhat smaller than usual, measures $38\frac{1}{2} \times 17$ inches (98.5×43.5 cm.). It was used at dances before being handed over to me, and pronounced to have a good note. [53]

There is no ritual attached to the making of these instruments. Anybody may make them, but as a considerable amount of labour is involved, not many people do. If a large one is wanted for a special dance, it is often borrowed from another village. When the owner of one of these instruments dies, his wife dashes it on the ground and breaks it, wailing as she does so. A man will sometimes break his own *mabu* when his wife dies. The pieces must be burnt, as must those of a *mabu* accidentally broken or worn out by use. On no account must they be thrown away. 549
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Method of use. The *mabu* is blown like a trumpet, with loose lip. It is played only by men or the bigger boys. The player clasps both hands round the instrument near its upper end, sometimes resting the lower end against his knee. He bends his head over the mouthpiece and blows with his mouth close up to it, his cheeks distended (Pl. 64a). The sound produced consists of one deep booming note not unlike that of one string of a bass viol. 534

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SOME ECONOMIC MATTERS

177 however, permitted to shoot in return, and as far as I could make
 684 out, the affair was generally hardly more than a form. This proce-
 685 dure is now, however, no longer permitted, matters of this kind
 being dealt with by the District Officer.

685 The theft of other property, even of pigs, is regarded as a minor
 offence, over which the injured parties are very angry and talk a
 great deal, but eventually agree to the settlement of the affair by
 the payment of a fine. I have a story of a man called Tianowan,
 living at Ruri, who stole a pig belonging to Mudidemets, which he
 killed and ate. He was made to pay back a pig to Mudidemets, which
 was killed and eaten by the two men together, 'then Mudidemets
 was not angry with Tianowan any more'. Another story tells how
 a group of boys were always stealing bananas belonging to a man
 who lived at a neighbouring village. One day he caught them, and
 brought them to his place, and held them prisoners. The *tsunaun*
 of their own village brought a length of *beroan* to pay the owner of
 the bananas to let them go; he said that was not enough, so the
 674 *tsunaun* paid him two lengths, and he let the boys go. I did not
 personally experience any cases of theft, although I neglected the
 advice of the planters to keep all my goods locked up. A boy about
 thirteen, living at Kurtatchi with his mother, but actually belong-
 ing to another village, had the reputation of being a thief (*ti a mot*).
 Every one knew this, and discussed it with disapprobation, and
 several people warned me not to allow him to come on to my
 verandah. But I never heard of his being punished for any definite
 theft, and I am uncertain how far the charges against him were
 true, and how far they were made because he did not really belong
 to the village, in which he was unpopular.

INTENTIONAL DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

425 As noted elsewhere in greater detail, a man's pigs and coco-nut
 768 palms, and a woman's taro, are used, on the death of the owner, to
 provide food for the people who come to wail. But it is not only
 the produce that is taken, the coco-nut palms are cut down—or
 were, until the practice was forbidden by the Government as
 wasteful—and the garden laid waste. If articles such as ornaments
 are put into the grave they are sometimes, but not always, broken.
 (See account of burying of pillow on p. 492.)

152 There are also other occasions on which property is intentionally
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On the present occasion the mother, a very old woman, had

DEATH AND THE URAR her 491

body smeared with black paint, which was also matted into thick
blobs in her hair. The widow showed none of these traditional
signs of mourning, contrary to the old custom, which prescribed
that the widow must put ashes on her hair and skin and must
have her arms and legs rubbed with the skin of a banana which has
been dipped in a mixture of red ochre and coco-nut oil. This she
had to retain all the time she remained in the house. She may not
eat whatever food was last eaten by her husband previous to his
death. In the olden days, at the end of the period of mourning she
would have become the wife of his brother, but this practice has
been given up in deference to the wishes of the missionary, who
encourages, while not enforcing, monogamy. It is now becoming
customary for a widow not to marry again, but if a man loses his
wife he usually takes another. 765
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Fate of the soul

I was told by one of the principal men of the village that in the
olden times they thought the spirit (*abiap* in the Petats dialect,
equivalent to the Kurtatchi *abin*, not to *urar* which is represented
by *amat*) of the dead man came out of the hole where he was buried
and came back and stayed in his house, so they destroyed the house
and by this means destroyed the *abiap*. The dead man's coco-nut
palms and other property were also destroyed. Now the mission
has taught them to believe that the *abiap* 'goes up on top' and does
not come back. 775
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It is thought that the *abiap* goes about looking for the person who
had poisoned him. When it has found him it tells him: 'You
poisoned me, you will die soon.' Soon after the man dies, and the
people know it was he who poisoned the other man. This belief
appears to be held still, though it is no longer customary, as in the
olden days, to put a piece of bamboo through the wall of the house
and question it as to who was responsible for the death. It was
supposed to move about and thus to indicate the answer. They say
it does not work at Petats any more, but assert that it still acts at
Lontia. 775
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Disposal of the dead man's possessions

In the case of Tairisia, his pigs had been eaten by his relatives
during his illness, at his own request. No further destruction of 768

- 768 his property took place, and his widow and children continued to live in the house in which he died.

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In other parts of Buka it is still customary to dispose of the dead person's possessions, either by burning or burying, special attention being paid to the section of bamboo which he had used as a pillow. At the village of Tung, on the west coast of Buka, I attended a ceremony the primary object of which was to celebrate the completion of a new 'men's house' at which the opportunity was taken (in accordance with the custom of making the most of any feast that may be happening) to bury the pillow and other belongings of the father of the owner of the 'men's house'. I could not find out when he had died, but one of the younger men remembered seeing him as an old man when he was a child. The pillow (*nuel* in the dialect spoken at Tung, which is very similar to that of Petats) was a length of bamboo about 2 feet long and 4 or 5 inches in diameter. It was placed on the cross-bar of the new 'men's house', wrapped in a very dirty bit of cloth and covered with a woman's hood, with a piece of red cloth hanging in front of it. There it remained till the morning after the conclusion of the ceremony described on p. 389. It would have been buried on the evening of that day, but for the occurrence of a tropical downpour. Early in the morning of the following day, Gonu, the dead man's son, Gonu's wife, and two other women, one of whom stood to him in the relationship called *mataha*, 'sister'—and therefore called the dead man *tama*, 'father'—brought out the pillow, opened out the cloth in which it was wrapped, and put into it some trade beads, an old coat, a dilapidated felt hat (the cherished possession of any native who can acquire one), some much-worn loin-cloths, and some dog's teeth. The pillow itself was cut in half, both halves were wrapped in a new pink loin-cloth, and put into a basket. They then went to the cemetery, inviting me to go with them. A young man who was not, so far as I could ascertain, any relation of the deceased came, too, bringing a yam spade. The dead man's son dug a hole at the head of his father's grave and lined it with a banana leaf. The cloth with its contents, and the pillow in its wrapping, were then laid in the hole, also the woman's hood which had covered it. One of the women, Gonu's *mataha*, set up a loud wailing and turned and walked away. The other women started to weed the grave. When the men had shovelled the earth back with the yam spade, we all returned to the village.

DEATH AND THE URAR

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While visiting other villages on Buka I obtained a little information bearing on the subject of death and funerary rites. Under the circumstances, my informants were naturally men with whom I was not well acquainted, and whose reliability I had no opportunity of checking. The details, however, are consistent, and the information, slight though it is, may perhaps be worth giving as corroborative evidence. It is transcribed from the pidgin-English record in my note-books, as the dialect of these villages differs sufficiently from those with which I am acquainted to make it necessary to fall back upon the lingua franca.

NOTES ON DEATH FROM THE VILLAGE OF LEMANMANU,
LONTIS COAST, W. BUKA

When a man dies his relatives must not eat taro for ten days. They may eat bananas, coco-nut, and yams. The women stay in the house and weep. In the olden days the body of a person of rank was kept for two months in the house, and was then taken out to sea in a canoe and thrown into the sea. They said it was no good to bury him because some one might come and dig him up.¹ Commoners could be buried. Sometimes a man was buried in the house and after a long time his bones were taken up and thrown into the sea. His pillow and other belongings were burnt on the fire which cooked the pigs for the feast.

NOTES ON DEATH FROM THE VILLAGE OF HANAHAN, E. BUKA

When a man dies, for ten days his relatives may not eat anything but bananas, yams, and coco-nuts. They must not touch taro, or pig, or opossum, or fish. At the end of the ten days they may make a fire and burn some taro, pig, fish, and opossum; then they may eat these things. For a person of rank, the whole village keeps this taboo for two months. They wash the body, put red ochre mixed with coco-nut oil on the hair, and outline the forehead with white. In times past they threw the body into the sea, but now they bury it. Loin-cloths and other things belonging to the dead man are put in the coffin. In times past these things were kept in the house until such time as a feast was made, then they were burnt. The relatives change their names.

¹ This apparently is a reference to the custom called in the Petats dialect *bahau* (see p. 487).

in order to acquire a wife. Abducted wives are married only in Buka and north Bougainville, but not in the southern regions of the island; it seems that all prisoners are killed there.

At a normal wedding, as far as I could ascertain, there are no further ceremonies. When the purchase is concluded, the man takes the bought woman home with him, and the wife's relatives give a present consisting of cooked food. After about a week the purchaser and his relatives reciprocate. At special weddings, however, certain festivities take place. In European museums one rather frequently finds objects from Buka and north Bougainville that are commonly called "dance clubs." Some of these are illustrated for example in Edge-Partington, Volume I, pages 244 and 245 (with the incorrect heading: "New Britain Archipelago"); Volume II, page 125 (the note to 3 is based on an error). Furthermore, in Schmeltz and Krause, Catalogue of the Museum of Godeffroy, Plate VI, Figures 3 and 3a. Also the dance club from Treasury Island that is depicted in Guppy's work unquestionably diffused from the north. These dance clubs are correctly named, but they are used only for specific ceremonies. If a chieftain gives his daughter to a native in marriage, great festivities are arranged. The participants fashion clubs of this sort, which are called kaisa and vary greatly according to the taste and the skill of the maker. Most frequently the flat clubs have a broad blade that is painted black, white and red, and are ornamented with the characteristic grotesque human figure or only with its head at the upper end. Other dance clubs are shaped like a lancet, in imitation of war clubs, and have triangular or diamond shaped figures that are painted red, white or black on a black or white background. As a rule they are all made of soft wood that is easy to work, but now and then you find them made out of palm wood or some other heavy hardwood. The wedding guests hold the clubs in their hands; groups of dancers surround the couple, sometimes both, sometimes just one of them, and the clubs are alternately held up in the air or stuck in the ground in a circle around the central figure. After a number of different figures have been executed, they throw away the kaisa, or the boys and youths pick them up and sell them to passing ships for a song. For this reason one can occasionally get hold of hundreds of these dance objects in that region without difficulty, whereas at other times it is impossible to acquire even a single one despite the most tempting offer.

When a woman's husband dies in Buka and north Bougainville, she returns to her parents, if they are still alive, or to her closest relatives;

the children accompany the mother. In south Bougainville and on the islands of the Bougainville Strait the wife of the deceased remains in the community; frequently the dead man's brother marries the widow; but if he is not so inclined or is already sufficiently provided with wives, the widow can marry another native if he pays the dead man's brother the customary purchase price. 768 •

[8] The chieftains normally have several wives; the number varies from five to fifty and even more. The common people have one, two or three wives, but rarely more. Male slaves may not marry. 768
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The women are treated relatively well; to be sure, they have to do a great part of the field work, but they are not slaves to the same extent as on the other Solomon Islands. Also their morality is on a far higher plane than elsewhere in the group. Promiscuous intercourse among unwedded people does not take place to the extent that it does, for example, on St. Christoval and on Guadalcanar; strict propriety is insisted upon in marriage. The wives frequently have a decisive influence on the conduct of their husbands, and I have often had occasion to observe that once you are on good terms with the wives, the husbands regulate their behavior accordingly. Gifts distributed to a few old women often have better success than all arts of persuasion. The chieftain's wives have an even better life; many of them do nothing at all; they keep their husband and company when he is at home and do various kinds of handwork. Some see to it that the plantations always supply the requisite amount of foodstuffs, but only when the husband condescends to work in the plantation with his own hands do all of his better halves accompany him. When he goes on war expeditions the whole group stays at home under the surveillance of a few of the older men who are unfit for battle. One of the chieftain's wives is designated as chief wife, and her male children are the actual heirs of the chieftain. When individual communities live on islands too small to support plantations and produce the needed amount of food, it is the wives' job to keep up market trade with the wealthier neighboring districts. Early in the morning you can see them going to the market in large and small boats, usually accompanied by an older man who probably has the duty of supervisor, since a single old man is scarcely able to provide any sort of effective protection in case of an enemy attack. 595
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